

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
WESTERN DIVISION

DIANA MCDONALD,

:

Plaintiff, : Case No. 3:14cv408

vs. : JUDGE WALTER H. RICE

COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY, :

Defendant. :

DECISION AND ENTRY ADOPTING REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE (DOC. #12) IN THEIR ENTIRETY; DEFENDANT'S OBJECTIONS TO SAID JUDICIAL FILING (DOC. #14) OVERRULED; JUDGMENT TO BE ENTERED IN FAVOR OF PLAINTIFF AND AGAINST DEFENDANT COMMISSIONER, VACATING COMMISSIONER'S DECISION THAT PLAINTIFF WAS NOT DISABLED AND, THEREFORE, NOT ENTITLED TO BENEFITS UNDER THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT, AND REMANDING THE CAPTIONED CAUSE, PURSUANT TO SENTENCE FOUR OF 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), FOR THE PAYMENT OF BENEFITS CONSISTENT WITH THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT, WITH THE DISABILITY ONSET DATE OF FEBRUARY 6, 2012, AND REMANDING THE CAPTIONED CAUSE TO THE DEFENDANT SECRETARY, PURSUANT TO SENTENCE FOUR OF 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), FOR FURTHER ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS TO DETERMINE WHETHER PLAINTIFF WAS UNDER A DISABILITY FOR THE PERIOD BETWEEN APRIL 11, 2011, TO FEBRUARY 6, 2012; TERMINATION ENTRY

Plaintiff has brought this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) to review a decision of the Defendant Commissioner denying Plaintiff's application for Social Security disability benefits. On January 29, 2016, the United States Magistrate Judge filed a Report and Recommendations (Doc. #12), recommending that the Commissioner's decision that Plaintiff was not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act be vacated; that no finding be

made as to whether Plaintiff was under a disability between April 11, 2011, and February 6, 2012, and that the captioned cause be remanded to the Defendant, pursuant to Sentence Four of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) for further consideration of whether Plaintiff was under a disability during this time period; and that the captioned matter be otherwise remanded to the Defendant, pursuant to Sentence Four of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), for payment of benefits consistent with the Social Security Act, with a disability onset date of February 6, 2012. Based upon reasoning and citations of authority set forth in the Magistrate Judge's Report and Recommendations (Doc. #12) and in the Plaintiff's Response to Defendant's Objections to that judicial filing (Doc. #14), as well as upon a thorough de novo review of this Court's file, including the Administrative Transcript (Doc. #6), and a thorough review of the applicable law, this Court adopts the aforesaid Report and Recommendations in their entirety and, in so doing, orders the entry of judgment in favor of the Plaintiff and against the Defendant Commissioner, concluding that the Commissioner's decision that Plaintiff was not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act was not supported by substantial evidence. The Defendant's Objections to said judicial filing (Doc. #14) are overruled. Accordingly, the decision of the Defendant Commissioner that Plaintiff was not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act is vacated/reversed.

In reviewing the Commissioner's decision, the Magistrate Judge's task is to determine if that decision is supported by "substantial evidence." 42 U.S.C. § 405(g). Under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C), this Court, upon objections being made to the Magistrate Judge's Report and Recommendations, is required to make a de novo review of those recommendations of the report to which objection is made. This de novo review, in turn, requires this Court to re-examine all the

relevant evidence, previously reviewed by the Magistrate Judge, to determine whether the findings of the Secretary [now Commissioner] are supported by "substantial evidence." Lashley v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 708 F.2d 1048, 1053 (6th Cir. 1983); Gibson v. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, 678 F.2d 653, 654 (6th Cir. 1982). This Court's sole function is to determine whether the record as a whole contains substantial evidence to support the Commissioner's decision. The Commissioner's findings must be affirmed if they are supported by "such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion." Richardson v. Perales, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971), citing Consolidated Edison Company v. NLRB, 305 U.S. 197, 229 (1938); Landsaw v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 803 F.2d 211, 213 (6th Cir. 1986). Substantial evidence means such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion. Richardson, *supra*, at 401; Ellis v. Schweicker, 739 F.2d 245, 248 (6th Cir. 1984). Substantial evidence is more than a mere scintilla, but only so much as would be required to prevent a directed verdict (now judgment as a matter of law) against the Commissioner if this case were being tried to a jury. Foster v. Bowen, 853 F.2d 483, 486 (6th Cir. 1988); NLRB v. Columbian Enameling and Stamping Company, 306 U.S. 292, 300 (1939). To be substantial, the evidence "must do more than create a suspicion of the existence of the fact to be established... [I]t must be enough to justify, if the trial were to a jury, a refusal to direct a verdict when the conclusion sought to be drawn from it is one of fact for the jury." LeMaster v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 802 F.2d 839, 840 (6th Cir. 1986), quoting NLRB v. Columbian Enameling and Stamping Company, *supra*.

In determining whether the Commissioner's findings are supported by substantial evidence, the Court must consider the record as a whole. Hephner v. Mathews, 574 F.2d 359 (6th Cir. 1978); Ellis, supra; Kirk v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 667 F.2d 524, 536 (6th Cir. 1981); Houston v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 736 F.2d 365 (6th Cir. 1984); Garner v. Heckler, 745 F.2d 383 (6th Cir. 1984). However, the Court may not try the case de novo, resolve conflicts in evidence or decide questions of credibility. Garner, supra. The findings of the Commissioner of Social Security and proceedings on Claimant's application for social security disability benefits are not subject to reversal merely because there exists in the record substantial evidence to support a different conclusion. Buxton v. Halter, Commissioner of Social Security, 246 F.3d 762 (6th Cir. 2001). If the Commissioner's decision is supported by substantial evidence, it must be affirmed, even if the Court as a trier of fact would have arrived at a different conclusion. Elkins v. Secretary of Health and Human Services, 658 F.2d 437, 439 (6th Cir. 1981).

In addition to the foregoing, in ruling as aforesaid, this Court makes the following, non-exclusive, observations:

1. The crux of this Court's (and the Magistrate Judge's) disagreement with the Administrative Law Judge centers around his failure to properly apply the correct legal criteria under the treating physician rule to Plaintiff's treating physician, Dr. Thomas Brunsman.

WHEREFORE, based upon the aforesaid, this Court adopts the Report and Recommendations of the United States Magistrate Judge (Doc. #12) in their entirety, having

concluded that the Commissioner's decision that Plaintiff was not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act was not supported by substantial evidence and that the Administrative Law Judge failed to apply the correct legal criteria under the treating physician rule. Defendant's Objections to said judicial filing (Doc. #14) are overruled. Judgment will be ordered entered in favor of the Plaintiff and against the Defendant Commissioner, vacating the decision of the Defendant Commissioner that Plaintiff was not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act; that the captioned cause be remanded to the Defendant Commissioner, pursuant to Sentence Four of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), for further consideration of whether Plaintiff was under a disability during the closed period from April 11, 2011 to February 6, 2012; and that the captioned cause be remanded to the Defendant Commissioner, pursuant to Sentence Four of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), for the immediate payment of benefits consistent with the Social Security Act, with a disability onset date of February 6, 2012.

The captioned cause is hereby ordered terminated upon the docket records of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, Western Division, at Dayton.

March 23, 2016



WALTER H. RICE, JUDGE
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

Copies to:

Counsel of record